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Message Text

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62
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /083 W
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R 232207Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 418

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2677

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, HO
SUBJECT: VIEWS OF LT. COLONEL MALDONADO

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2585

BEGIN SUMMARY: LT. COLONEL MARIO MALDONADO, DIRECTOR OF INA, BELIEVES THAT AGRARIAN REFORM IS ONE OF THE BASIC PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE COUNTRY. HE BELIEVES THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL WOULD MODIFY THE EXISTING LAW IF THERE IS NO AGREEMENT WITHIN THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN COUNCIL ABOUT PROPOSED REGULATIONS. HIS GREATEST CONCERN IS TO AVOID A MILITARY-CAMPESINO CONFRONTATION THAT COULD END IN BLOODSHED. END SUMMARY.

1. POLOFF VISITED LT. COLONEL MARIO MALDONADO MUNOZ, DIRECTOR OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM INSTITUTE (INA) ON

JUNE 19. MALDONADO EMPHASIZED THAT THE AGRARIAN REFORM QUESTION WAS ONE OF THE BASIC PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE COUNTRY. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE RECENT LAND INVASIONS WERE AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT COULD BE EXPECTED IF THE AGRARIAN REFORM IS NOT PUT FULLY INTO EFFECT. HE SAID THAT IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTROL EVENTS IN THE AGRARIAN REFORM AREA OR IT WILL FIND ITSELF CONTROLLED BY THOSE EVENTS.
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2. MALDONADO STATED THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL UNION OF CAMPESINOS (UNC) IS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED WHILE THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CAMPESINOS (ANACH) IS MORE PRAGMATICALLY ORIENTED. HE OBSERVED THAT ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS, PARTICU-

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LARLY IN THE SOUTHERN AREA AROUND CHOLUTECA, ARE OPENLY AIDING THE UNC. HE SAID THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR THE ANACH LEADERSHIP TO CONTINUE ITS POLICY OF OBEYING THE LAW WHEN THEIR FOLLOWERS SEE UNC CARRYING THE BANNER OF LAND INVASIONS AND INSTANT AGRARIAN REFORM.

3. HE SAID THAT THE IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS FOR THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW ARE PRESENTLY IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. AFTER THE REGULATIONS HAVE BEEN APPROVED IN THE COUNCIL, THEY WILL HAVE TO GO TO CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR FOR SIGNATURE. MALDONADO SAID THAT THE REGULATIONS WOULD THEN HAVE TO GO TO THE NEWLY-FORMED NATIONAL AGRARIAN COUNCIL (SEE REFTEL) FOR REVIEW. HE WAS CONCERNED THAT THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN COUNCIL WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO AGREE ON THE REGULATIONS THUS DELAYING AGRARIAN REFORM EFFORTS. MALDONADO SAID THAT THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL IS PREPARED TO MAKE CHANGES IF THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN COUNCIL BELIEVES THAT CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE LAW SHOULD BE ALTERED. HE MENTIONED THAT ONE OF HIS CONTINUING PROBLEMS HAS BEEN DISAGREEMENT WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ON THE PACE AND NATURE OF AGRARIAN REFORM.

4. COMMENT: DURING THE CONVERSATION, MALDONADO REMARKED THAT THE MILITARY HAD BEEN PREPARED TO JAIL UNC CAMPESINOS IF THEY HAD FAILED TO EVACUATE INVADED LANDS. HE IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF A MILITARY-CAMPESINO CONFRONTATION THAT COULD LEAD TO BLOODSHED. AS HE SAID DURING THE INTERVIEW, "MY COMRADES WOULD RATHER FIGHT THE SALVADORANS THAN FELLOW HONDURANS". MALDONADO'S HASTE TO ADVANCE AGRARIAN REFROM STEMS FROM HIS VIEW THAT THERE WILL BE FURTHER LAND

INVASIONS WITH AN INCREASING CHANCE OF CONFRONTATION UNLESS MORE LAND CAN BE DISTRIBUTED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
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